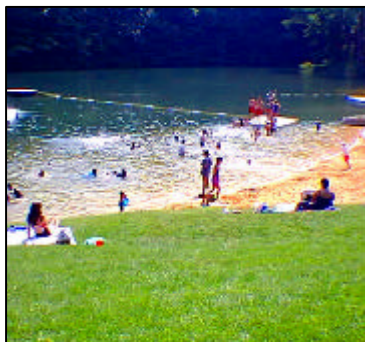


RECREATION AND PARKS

INTRODUCTION

This section of the master plan, along with other recreation and parks-related information included or referenced within this plan, shall function as Baltimore County's *1998 Land Preservation and Recreation Plan* (LPRP). The LPRP, required by Title 5, Subtitle 9 of the Natural Resources Article of the *Annotated Code of Maryland*, serves as a guide for meeting the recreation, park, and open space needs of the citizens of Baltimore County. In preparing the following information, the recommendations and mandates of several other documents were considered and incorporated. These documents include the *Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000*, the *1993 Maryland Land Preservation and Recreation Plan*, and the "Seven Visions" of the 1992 State Planning Act. This effort represents the county's vision and needs regarding open space, recreational facilities, and parks as they affect all aspects of life in Baltimore County.



Public recreation is an important component of a quality living experience.

Public recreation, be it in the form of participation in team sports or a group activity, enjoyment of a family picnic, or a walk alone along the shoreline, is an essential component of a quality living experience. Recreation helps to promote physical and mental well-being, and provides a valuable platform for social interaction and personal growth. The Department of Recreation

and Parks is charged with the mission of leading the way in providing recreational opportunity. To achieve this mission, the department must secure the parklands and open spaces that provide the setting for public recreation. Established communities are often lacking in recreation facilities, and creative methods to provide local facilities should be undertaken. Once the land is in place, it is often necessary to make improvements to provide the recreational amenities and support facilities required to meet citizens needs and preferences. Finally, the department must work cooperatively with the 44 citizen-run Recreation and Parks Councils who provide the volunteer time, effort, and fund-raising that make organized recreation programs possible.



The following policies, issues, and actions, while listed within the urban-related section of the plan, apply to the rural section as well. Because the county's policy regarding recreation and parks emphasizes the individual, its focus is logically upon the heavily populated urban areas of the county. These urban areas house the vast majority of existing parks and recreational facilities and are thus influenced by all of the issues identified. While the recreational needs of the citizens in the county's rural communities must be adequately addressed, the Department of Recreation and Parks will continue to invest the bulk of its resources into the more populated urban areas.

POLICIES

- Acquire a wide range of parklands and open spaces sufficient to meet the State of Maryland's prescribed parkland acreage goals.
- Develop an assortment of active and passive recreational facilities based on the recreational needs and preferences of county citizens.
- Work cooperatively with the volunteer Recreation and Parks Councils to provide a diversity of recreation programs and activities.
- Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive parklands and open space areas for the benefit of future generations.
- Provide integral open space within newly developed residential areas, especially through the mandatory dedication of Local Open Space in the development process.
- Work cooperatively with other county and state agencies and neighboring jurisdictions in mutually beneficial recreation and park-related efforts.
- Utilize and actively support valuable state and federal programs supporting recreation and parks.



The county will develop an assortment of active and passive recreational facilities based on the recreational needs and preferences of county citizens.



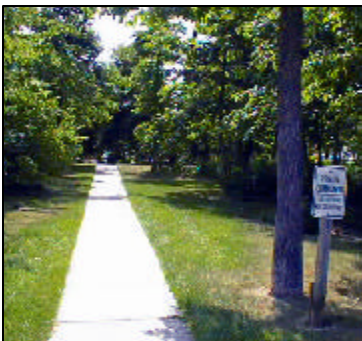
- Pursue alternative methods for providing and funding recreational opportunities and resources.

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

It is the responsibility of the Department of Recreation and Parks to provide parklands and recreational programs in Baltimore County. Partnerships with citizen groups and county and state agencies, such as the county Department of Education, the county Police Department, and the state Department of Natural Resources, have enhanced the ability to provide additional recreation services cost-effectively. Most of the issues and actions discussed below concern the expansion of recreational opportunity, which is a key factor in maintaining viable communities (Map 17).

Issue: Parkland Acreage Needs

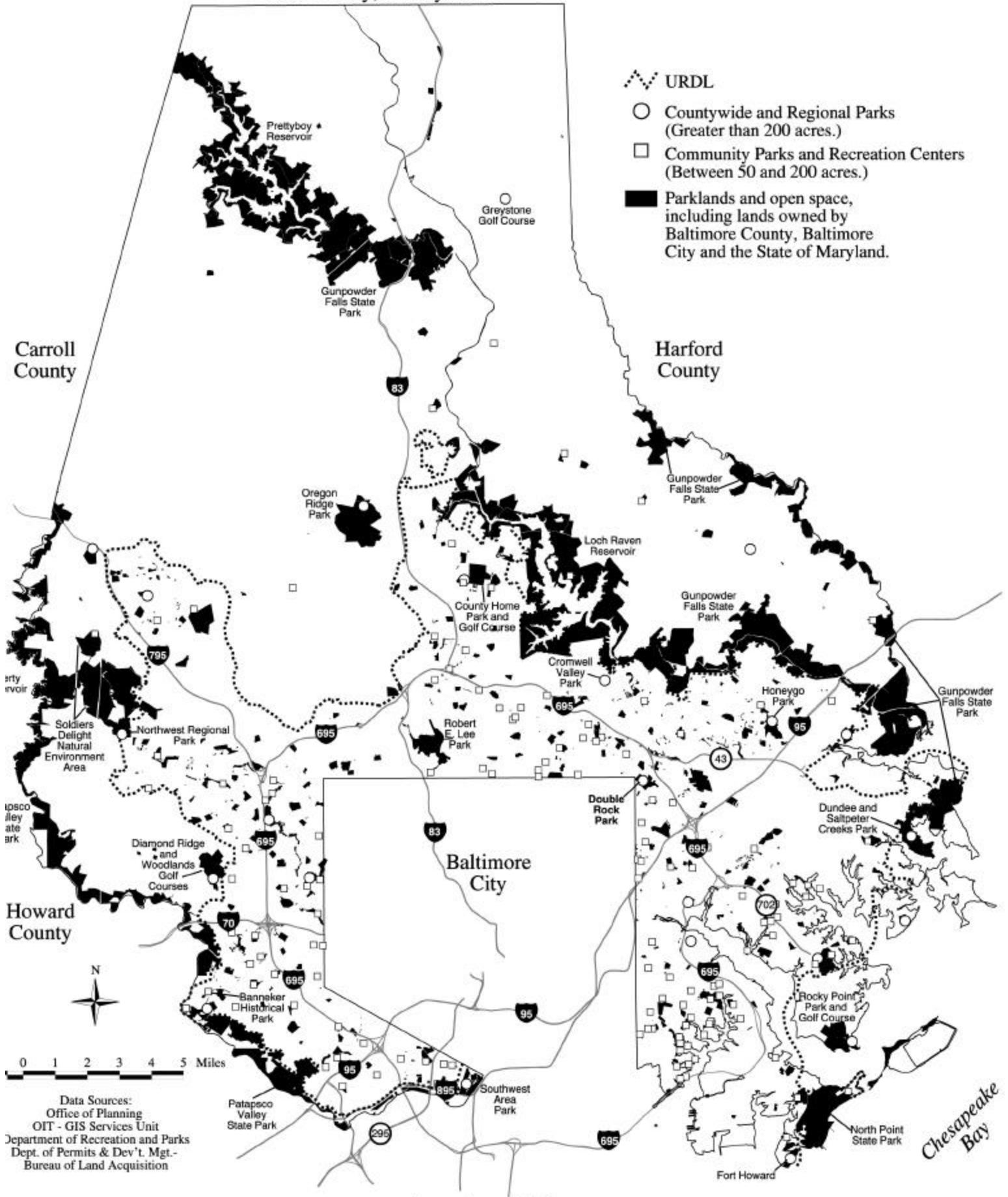
As Baltimore County's population continues to grow, so too will the need for parkland and open space. Methods for determining the sufficiency of parkland and open space have long been studied and debated. The State of Maryland has identified a goal for its localities, which Baltimore County endorses, of providing 30 acres of parkland and open space per 1,000 residents. Within this goal, all parks with recreational facilities, be they active or passive, are counted on an acre-for-acre basis (e.g., a 20-acre developed community park would count as 20 acres), while natural open spaces and undeveloped parklands count only one-third (e.g., a 30-acre open space with no recreational facilities would count as only 10 acres). Generally, only county-owned and/or operated parklands and open space may be counted towards the county's acreage goal.



Most of the county's open spaces, such as this trail in Mays Chapel, are provided as part of the land development process.

Most of the county's "open spaces" are provided as part of the land development process. Many of these are deeded to homeowners/condo owners associations or the land developer. While these cannot be counted towards the county's park and open space goal, they provide a significant open space and recreational benefit regardless of ownership. Private/homeowner association ownership of these lands (which are usually small in size) should continue to be encouraged by the county in order to provide the benefit of open space without incurring the burden of public maintenance. To effectively meet the parkland needs of the county's citizens, a variety of planning, management and maintenance techniques must be implemented. The optimization of existing resources is necessary to effectively serve the public.

York County, Pennsylvania



Map 17

Park and Recreation Sites (does not include school-recreation centers)



Actions

1. Formulate a detailed document that focuses upon the need for additional parklands, to be titled the “*1999 Baltimore County Parkland and Recreational Facility Needs Assessment*.” Regularly update this document and use it as a guide for the parkland acquisition program.
2. Develop a dialogue with the State of Maryland and with other local jurisdictions to discuss the park acreage analysis methodology. Specifically address the issue of private/homeowner association-owned open space, and why these areas do not count towards meeting park and open space acreage goals.
3. Continue to revise management structure to effectively handle the new responsibilities associated with the acquisition of additional parkland.
4. Seek alternative methods for managing and maintaining new sites. Where appropriate, enter into revenue-generating agreements, such as lease of farming rights, for the period between when a property is acquired and when it is developed for active recreation.
5. Comprehensively inventory and map all parks, school-recreation centers, open spaces, and recreational facilities.
6. Explore all appropriate avenues for acquiring key parklands, including use of the county’s power of condemnation. Creative solutions are particularly important in established communities where open space must often be created by redeveloping built sites. The timely purchase of important prospective park sites must be facilitated to avoid acquisition cost increases that occur when properties are purchased or planned for development.

The county’s open space program will focus on securing open parcels of land suitable for active recreational use.

Issue: Updating the Local Open Space Regulations

The current *Local Open Space Manual* was written at a time when few environmental regulations existed; thus, its focus was on attaining and protecting environmentally sensitive areas such as stream buffers and wetlands. Now that environmental regulations and codes protect these sensitive areas, the county’s open space program should be refocused on securing open parcels of land suitable for active recreational use.

The county’s current local open space regulations are outdated and do not insure that quality active recreational open space is attained within the development process. A selective approach should be implemented to guard against building a vast network of small, scattered open space parcels that become a management and maintenance burden.

Actions

1. Revise the *Local Open Space Manual* to improve its effectiveness for obtaining a viable, high-quality local open space system that provides for the active recreation and open space needs of the county's citizens.
2. Revise the per-unit local open space requirement requiring mandatory open space dedication and re-evaluate the zones in an effort to have the development community assist in meeting state-mandated park and open space acreage goals, as well as meeting the recreational needs of the communities that are being developed.
3. Provide the county and Department of Recreation and Parks greater discretion in selecting open space land within prospective residential developments.



Issue: Evaluating Existing Local Open Space

The quality of existing local open space within the county varies, with many substandard parcels that are of little value to the public. These numerous and often isolated properties can be a significant drain on county resources, as their small size and interspersed nature make them difficult to maintain. The location of some open spaces also tends to attract a high level of encroachment from adjacent landowners. Open spaces that lie to the rear of residences are often “sectioned-off” as extensions of private back yards. Some of these open spaces, however, could be improved to provide for local recreational needs.

Actions

1. Investigate and evaluate the current use of existing local open spaces to determine potential for further recreational development, as well as to guard against encroachment from neighboring property owners.
2. Target funds derived from local open space waiver fees to provide recreational opportunity where needed, especially for neighborhood/community recreation. Encourage the matching of local open space funds by community groups to maximize the buying power for local recreation amenities.
3. Seek to attain agreements with local residents and groups whereby they will own, manage, maintain, and use open parcels for the recreational benefit of their community.



The county will target funds from local open space waiver fees to provide recreational opportunity where needed.

Issue: Greenways

The *Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000* identified “Stream Valley Greenways” as a parks and open space issue, introducing an “Open Space

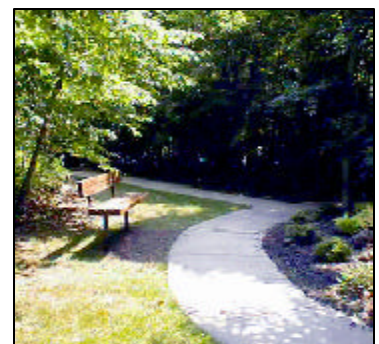
Network” map that identified a proposed stream valley park/greenway network. The county has since experienced varying degrees of success in implementing the greenway system. The Number Nine Trolley Line Trail (Catonsville) was developed adjacent to the Cooper Branch, and efforts to create greenway networks in the Owings Mills and Patapsco Valley areas have recently begun to be realized. The efforts of community organizations have resulted in the establishment of the Number Eight Trolley Line Trail, with additional efforts underway to recreationally develop the Catonsville “Short Line” right of way. While such trails and linear landforms are not currently included in the stream valley-based greenways system, they are valuable recreational resources that should be included in any expansion of the greenways concept. On the other hand, several trails that were proposed along designated greenways have met with local opposition, and a significant number of property owners and developers have been unwilling to grant public access easements along designated greenways. The county must continue to evaluate and refine the greenway program to ensure that these areas remain available for future generations.



The county and the Department of Recreation and Parks face many challenges relating to implementing a countywide greenway network. Plans must be developed that provide for the adequate management, maintenance, and policing of greenways that have been, or will be made, available for public use. Public concerns about greenways must also be addressed if this system is to become a reality.

Actions

1. Classify greenways as either “environmental” or “recreational” as indicated on the “Greenways” map (Map 18). Environmental greenways will remain predominantly natural and serve as open space and wildlife corridors, with little if any public access. Recreational greenways are intended for public use and may include improved trails and other recreational amenities.
2. Establish stronger greenways-related guidelines and requirements within the *Local Open Space Manual*. Develop separate criteria for the two different classes of greenways and use the *Local Open Space Manual* as a key document in creating a countywide greenway system. Where development occurs along an identified recreational greenway, seek to have appropriate recreational amenities such as trails constructed as part of the local open space requirement.



The county will investigate the feasibility of recreational greenways with public trails and other recreational amenities.



3. Acquire key parcels along greenways to serve as destination and access points, especially within recreational greenways.
4. Explore alternative methods for managing, maintaining, and policing greenways. Obtain the assistance of trail user groups, clubs, and other interested parties in handling these duties.
5. Expand the greenways concept to include other suitable linear corridors such as urban walking routes, bikeways, former rail and trolley lines/right of ways, scenic byways, and water and coastal routes. Develop criteria for identifying such corridors and incorporate these into a comprehensive greenway, trail and corridor map. Establish guidelines for attaining or creating such corridors, including the provision of bike lanes along key roadways that are being newly constructed or improved.

Issue: Community Recreation Facility Needs

The provision of community recreational facilities and programs is a primary mission of the county's Department of Recreation and Parks. From its inception, the department has been committed to providing traditional recreational facilities such as ball diamonds, athletic fields, and tennis and multi-purpose courts within each of its neighborhoods and communities. This focus on community-based recreation was a primary factor in the formulation of the school-recreation center concept. As the county's population has increased over the past forty years, it has become evident that school-recreation centers alone cannot meet all of the community recreational needs. While times have changed and the role of recreation and parks has diversified, the concept of community recreation remains vital. When evaluating the need for recreational facilities, a variety of factors must be considered, including such less apparent issues as the effects of facility overuse and the impact of certain recreational facilities on nearby home and property owners.

Actions

1. Formulate and regularly update the "1999 Baltimore County Parkland and Recreational Facility Needs Assessment" and use it as a guide for the recreational facility development program. Seek to acquire sites for facilities in areas where existing parklands, school-recreation centers, and open spaces cannot support further development to meet community recreation needs.
2. Revise the methodology for calculating recreational facility needs. Consider implementing a more qualitative analysis that studies programmed use of community facilities, as well as the effects of facility

The county's focus on community-based recreation was a primary factor in the formulation of the school-recreation center concept.



use. Continue to rely on the expertise and experience of the local staff and the Recreation and Parks Councils to help gauge community needs.

3. Address the problem of facility over-use, especially as it relates to providing ball diamonds and athletic fields. Initiate and maintain an in-house evaluation whereby applicable facilities are regularly inventoried and rated according to use.
4. Continue to exhibit creativity in the design and development of community and neighborhood parks. Encourage the participation of the community in the design process of such park facilities, and seek to minimize potential negative impacts of these facilities on nearby and adjacent property owners.

Issue: School-Recreation Centers

The concept of public schools serving a dual role, as both educational institution and recreation center, continues to be the cornerstone of the Baltimore County recreation and parks system. Within this concept, the Department of Recreation and Parks participates in the acquisition and development of school-recreation centers. Recreational facilities such as gymnasiums, activity rooms, and recreation offices are often built within the school, while outdoor facilities include ball diamonds, athletic fields, tennis and multi-purpose courts. In some instances, outdoor recreational facilities are developed prior to construction of the school building, providing a valuable recreational opportunity to the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. Whether provided in concert with a new school, or prior to the school construction, school-recreation centers form the backbone of community-based recreation within the county.

While the joint “school-recreation center” concept serves to efficiently use land for public purposes, coordination in usage, planning and disposition of existing resources and facilities are required in order for such efforts to be successful.

Actions

1. Continue to participate in the acquisition, development, and staffing of school-recreation centers, in order for these sites to function as community recreation centers.
2. Continue the “Joint Use Agreement” between the Board of Education and the Department of Recreation and Parks. These entities must continue to work cooperatively to resolve conflicts in use and scheduling at these sites, keeping in mind the interest and well being of the public.

Whether provided in concert with a new school or prior to school construction, school-recreation centers form the backbone of community-based recreation within the county.



3. Evaluate the status and plans for existing undeveloped school-recreation center sites to determine the feasibility of developing them into outdoor recreation facilities. The Department of Recreation and Parks and the Board of Education must coordinate plans for recreational development that are compatible with possible future school development.
4. Target services to selected sites in communities identified by the Department of Recreation and Parks as having significant recreational needs.
5. Transfer ownership of existing sites owned by the Board of Education to Baltimore County in those instances where the Board of Education no longer plans to construct schools. Use these sites, where needed, as park and recreation sites.

Issue: Aging Recreational Infrastructure

Over the past several years, a significant number of the county's park and recreation facilities and amenities have begun showing varying degrees of deterioration. The effects of aging not only apply to the numerous buildings that house or service recreational programs, but also appear in such recreational amenities as playground structures, ball diamond backstops and player benches, athletic court surfaces, boat ramps and piers, and field and court lighting standards. The rehabilitation and replacement of such facilities and amenities must be addressed to preserve recreational opportunity and to ensure public safety. Like many other parts of the county's infrastructure, a balance must be achieved in maintaining existing facilities, upgrading others, and acquiring additional sites. In seeking this balance, the county must account for facility usefulness, public safety, and cost.

Actions

1. Explore preventive maintenance practices in an effort to extend the life of existing facilities and reduce the cost of replacing aging infrastructure.
2. Expand the existing site inspection program to identify and address problem situations in a timely manner.
3. Continue to seek opportunities to convert obsolete or surplus public-owned facilities to recreational use where feasible.

Issue: Region-Serving Facilities

Large region-serving and "special" facilities are needed to provide a diversity of recreational opportunities for the citizens of the county. Such facilities

***The county
will rehabilitate
and replace
deteriorating
recreational
facilities and
amenities.***

often go beyond the scope of traditional community-based facilities, and are designed to support a larger sector of the population, or to provide a specialized activity. Where appropriate, these facilities should be operated on a fee-basis, with the collected funds used to sustain the facility or to support other recreational programs and facilities.



Actions

1. Continue to acquire lands capable of housing specialized regional facilities. Develop a variety of special regional facilities such as environmental, historical, and cultural interpretive centers; athletic complexes; indoor sports arenas; and ice skating rinks.
2. Strategically locate these special facilities to meet the recreational needs of citizens in all areas of the county. It may be necessary to explore available lands in the rural areas of the county, outside the URDL, in order to find parcels that are large enough to support such facilities.
3. Consider public-private agreements that would allow for the development and management of regional facilities at little or no cost to the county.
4. Where appropriate, allocate funding for professional county staffing of these facilities, while promoting the volunteerism that sustains the county's recreational programs.
5. Continue to implement master plans for regional parks, such as Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks Park, Benjamin Banneker Historical Park, and the former Associated Jewish Charities property.
6. Continue the development of a "working" or "model" farm at Cromwell Valley Park.

Issue: Enterprise Facilities

The Department of Recreation and Parks has, in recent years, designated a number of its sites as "enterprise facilities." Enterprise facilities operate on a fee structure, with a mandate to be self-sustaining. Currently, the Oregon Ridge Lodge and Beach, Miami Park Beach, Rocky Point Park Beach, and Loch Raven Fishing Center are operated within the Department of Recreation and Parks' Enterprise Fund. In addition to facility use charges, these sites generate funds through programs such as concerts and special events. The Department of Recreation and Parks' self-sustaining enterprise facilities provide valuable large-scale recreational opportunities at little cost to the taxpayers. The enterprise system should be expanded, with clear standards defined.



Self-sustaining enterprise facilities such as the Loch Raven fishing center provide valuable recreational opportunities at little cost to the taxpayers.



The county will continue to provide for specialized recreational needs such as therapeutic recreation, child care programs, and leisure opportunities for seniors.

Actions

1. Use public input to develop specific criteria for determining which sites and facilities will be included as enterprise facilities. Maintain a balance between fee-charging enterprises and free public facilities.
2. Subject to the development of selection criteria, investigate potential sites and facilities suitable for inclusion within the enterprise system.
3. Provide sufficient opportunity for the enterprise system to grow and expand. Enable the system to reinvest user fees in order to continue to meet the needs of the public.
4. Investigate other non-traditional, innovative facilities and programs to be developed or instituted at enterprise fund sites by private and non-profit organizations.
5. In those instances where private entities or vendors are involved in enterprise operations, ensure that the public is being properly served, and that parks and facilities are being appropriately used.
6. Resolve issues involving the investment of significant capital dollars into infrastructure for enterprise fund facilities.

Issue: Specialized Recreational Needs

The Department of Recreation and Parks' role in meeting the recreation and leisure needs of the county's citizens has vastly expanded over the years. In addition to providing traditional recreation programs for youth and adults, other "specialized recreational needs" such as therapeutic recreation, child care programs, and leisure opportunities for seniors are also provided. Many of these specialized needs are met through cooperative efforts and programs with other county agencies. The Department of Aging, for instance, provides the vast majority of the county's recreational programs for seniors, with additional programs being offered through the Department of Recreation and Parks. Further, the Department of Recreation and Parks teams up with the Police Department and other county agencies to provide and staff Police Athletic League Recreation Centers, which play a vital role in helping at-risk youth learn the values of sportsmanship, fairness, teamwork, and responsibility.

Individuals with Disabilities: Meeting the recreational needs of individuals with disabilities requires specialized services often governed by federal and state law. The county and the Department of Recreation and Parks are committed to making county parks, facilities, and programs as inclusive as possible to all residents.

Actions

1. Continue to renovate existing parks and recreation facilities and ensure that all new construction is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
2. Continue to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities to allow for full participation, including adapted equipment, program modifications and support services.
3. Continue to promote specialized therapeutic recreation programs designed for individuals with disabilities, as well as opportunities for inclusion within recreational programs in which both disabled and non-disabled individuals participate.



At-Risk Youth: The lessons learned through recreational and educational outlets can play an important role in building a youth's self-image, and in helping him or her avoid the pitfalls of alcohol and drug dependency and crime. The development of Police Athletic League (PAL) Recreation Centers in key communities within the county remains a high priority.

Actions

1. Continue cooperative efforts between the Police Department, the Department of Recreation and Parks, and other county agencies to promote the Police Athletic League (PAL) Recreation Center concept.
2. Maintain staffing for the PAL recreation centers through the Police Department, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Office of Substance Abuse, and the Baltimore County Department of Library.
3. Provide a platform for adult and parental volunteerism and involvement, such as the involvement of the local Recreation and Parks Councils with the PAL recreation centers in their areas.
4. Increase outreach efforts to financially limited families and individuals by using registration fee waivers or discounts.
5. Continue to seek and use federal and community grants to supplement the county's efforts.



The development of PAL Recreation Centers remains a high priority.

Issue: Capital Funding Alternatives

The population and development growth within the county is challenging the ability of Baltimore County to provide sufficient parkland and recreational amenities. The Department of Recreation and Parks must pursue alternative funding sources that will assist in meeting the leisure needs of the county's residents. Such agreements and sponsorships have been a positive asset to the county over the past several years. Programs such as Patrons of the



Park, the Group Leadership Gifts and Grants Program, and the Community Assisted Enhancement of Facilities Program have allowed county residents to become actively involved in providing for their community's recreational needs. The resources obtained through these programs are not only an asset to the county, but a tangible source of civic pride.

Actions

1. Seek public/private and public/non-profit partnerships for the acquisition, development, and management of park and recreation sites and facilities. Some possible partnerships include the following:
 - private development of large-scale facilities in exchange for a management lease of the site to the private entity; and
 - “sponsorship” of projects, whereby a private entity donates funds or services for the development of an amenity.
2. Aggressively pursue financial grants available through the federal government and other sources. Optimize county resources through cooperative efforts between county agencies. Work closely with citizen groups and Recreation and Parks Councils to assist in obtaining and administering community grants for recreation projects.
3. Continue to promote and participate in programs that rely on the support and self-sufficiency of the county's neighborhoods and communities.